STANFORD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305 • (415) 321-1200

STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
Department of Genetics

March 23, 1970

Dr. Franz J. Ingelfinger
Editor
New England Journal of Medicine
10 Shattuck Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02115

Dear Dr. Ingelfinger:

Your issue of August 21, 1969 carried an editorial(1) "Chemical Weapons on the Home Front" with which I heartily concurred. It was addressed to the potential hazards of the use of 1-chloroacetophenone as a harrassing or incapacitating agent in military and police work, and even in unregulated civilian use.

The editorial correctly emphasized the near-absence of previous scientific investigation of the biological mechanisms of action of chloroacetophenone. It accompanied an article in the same issue that described two cases of allergic contact dermatitis associated with its use.

Prior to that time my own search of the literature on chloroacetophenone had also been unrewarding.

Quite by accident, I have just encountered a description of experimental co-carcinogenesis with this compound in mice which deserves to be restored to the currently available documentation on a subject that has wide interest.(2)

The paucity of experimental information, compounded by the difficulty of retrieving it, point to the great caution that must be exercised in promulgating the use of any new compounds, and particularly those whose very utility depends on some form of toxic effect about whose biochemical mechanism we are ignorant.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg, Ph.D., M.D.
Professor of Genetics

(1) Pearlman, A.L. "Chemical Weapons on the Home Front". New Eng. J. Med. 281:442-443, 1969.

(2) Gwynn, R.H. and M. H. Salaman. "Studies on Co-carcinogenesis. SH-Reactors and Other Substances Tested for Co-carcinogenic Action in Mouse Skin. Br. J. Cancer. VII: 482-489, 1953.